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DESERT MESH





Competing to Save Lives

Medics Go Head to Head for Honors

Call it continuing education with an incentive.

The “Medic of the Year” competition allowed ARCENT-Qatar Capt. Jim Jones, director of health services, to assess the strengths and weaknesses of his staff. It allowed his staff of soldiers and NCOs to compete for three and four-day passes off post.

While Jones had organized similar events at other posts, it was the first such competition to take place at a military post in the Middle East.

“Most medical facilities in the United States have a plan like this,” said Jones. “It definitely motivates those involved. It gives them something to shoot for, but at the same time it also builds up the team and lets us assess their capabilities.”

Sgt. Michael Graydon, the winner of the “NCO of the Year” award and a four-day pass, described the two-day competition as intense but well worth the time and effort expended.

“Capt. Jones has very high standards that he expects us to live up to, but he pushes hard for things like the passes awarded,” said Graydon. “He does things for the soldier.”

The testing consisted of hands on drills, a lengthy written test and an oral interview with Sgt. Maj. George Ponder. Jones plans to use the results to design a specific training plan for his staff.

“It was a very unique opportunity that enabled us to assess and award the staff simultaneously,” said Jones.



Cover: Graydon performs CPR as part of the “Medic of the Year” competition. Top: Spc. Traci Preston, Soldier of the Year, assists Tech. Sgt. Glen Spradlin, a medic, transfer Capt. James Jones from a gurney to a operation table. Below: Spc. Pamela Burleson wraps a sling around “patient,” Truman T. Samera, an EMT. (Photos by David Gatchell)

5-Day Forecast

Outlook

Temp.
High/Low

Thu.		Sunny	95/79
Fri.		Sunny	97/79
Sat.		Sunny	99/78
Sun.		Sunny	98/78
Mon.		Sunny	98/78

New to the Video Hut



2 weeks notice



black hawk down

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Are You Always a Soldier?

Do you stop soldiering when you take the DCUs off at night? Are you selective about when you're a soldier? Do you consider yourself a soldier only when you're at work or when it's convenient?

Your answer should be an emphatic, "No."

As U.S. Army soldiers, we devote ourselves to protecting our nation's freedom and interests. We live our lives on a level above the general public and conduct ourselves under regulations, policies and standards. As soldiers, we use words like duty, honor, selfless service and integrity to govern our conduct and actions at all times.

When we took our oaths, we devoted our lives to these beliefs 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. You accepted that you may be put in harm's way to preserve freedom and that you will be a soldier until the day you hang up your uniform for good. This is the life of an American fighting soldier – a life you personally chose. There is, I believe, no greater way to devote one's life than to stand up, pick up a rifle and defend his or her nation.

This isn't an easy job. It's a job that takes dedication, discipline, responsibility and integrity. This is a job not just anyone can do.

It's vital that every soldier understands that the image you portray, *especially* off-duty and off-post, is a direct reflection on the Army and our nation. When a civilian comes into contact with a soldier off-post, they immediately draw conclusions about the entire Army based on what they perceive from this one soldier. So ask yourself: "When a civilian meets me off-post, what image do I portray?" Are you clean-shaven, have a good haircut, courteous and in appropriate dress? Or do you say to yourself, "It's the weekend and I'm off-post, so there's no reason to shave," or "I'll just wait until Monday to get the haircut that I need, since it's the weekend"? Being a

soldier 24/7/365 means that you hold yourself to the same standards whether you're standing in-ranks inspection or whether you're on 30-day leave. Standards like shaving, having good haircuts, not wearing earrings (for males) or having body piercings go into effect the day you raise your right hand until the day you're finally out.

Maintaining and enforcing these standards are where self-discipline, honor and integrity come into play. Your leaders cannot be looking over your shoulder constantly, telling you to get a haircut or shave or that you need to turn your music down. It's up to you to display self-discipline to do the right thing. Doing the right thing even when no one is around defines integrity.

Leaders, it may be time to re-look your leadership style as well. We need to tighten up on the standards. Conduct more inspections to let your soldiers know that these standards will be enforced both on duty and off. You must set the example at all times to let your soldiers know what the standards are, since they look to you to see what right looks like. Your values and morals will filter down to your soldiers if you display them all the time. Encourage your soldiers to take the initiative and display self-discipline in your absence and do what is right, even when you're not there to guide them.

Being an American soldier is a tremendous responsibility that must not be taken lightly. You represent the Army and our nation around the clock. Show people that the Army is a collection of proud professionals, striving to keep our nation safe and providing the very blanket of freedom that they sleep so soundly under each night.

NCOs lead the way!

By Sgt. Maj. George D. Ponder,
ARCENT-Qatar's senior NCO

Ramadan Considerations



A local Qatari plays an Oud, a Middle Eastern guitar, during a recent Headstart course. With Ramadan approaching, it's paramount military members, defense civilians and contractors are especially cognizant of Muslim traditions.

As the Muslim holy month of Ramadan approaches, it's important to understand the significance of the time and practices of our Muslim hosts.

Ramadan dates are approximately Oct. 26 to Nov. 24. The exact dates are determined by the sighting of the new moon. While Camp As Sayliyah will function business as usual, there will be marked differences in the community.

The history and culture of Ramadan is multifaceted. Most notably, Muslims are expected to abstain from eating, drinking, smoking or having impure thoughts during the day. The fasting begins at daybreak and ends at sunset.

Traditionally, all quarrels should be settled, debts paid and those at war should cease armed conflict for the month.

Breaking the fast at the end of the day turns into a major event. The Iftar (evening meal) is often shared with friends and relatives. More food is consumed during this month than at any other time. The Iftar is akin to having a Thanksgiving meal every day for a month.

During Ramadan, take care on the roads. Remember that most drivers are dehydrated, hungry and may be going through tobacco withdrawal. There are many road accidents during this month.

Another significant change during Ramadan is the closure of all restaurants and fast-food establishments during the fasting hours. The hotels are the exception; they will have at least one restaurant open during the day.

Shops generally open for a short time in the morning and re-open around an hour after sunset until 10 p.m. or later.

The month of Ramadan significantly affects host-country productivity. Be prepared to demonstrate more patience and tolerance.

Appropriate off-post behavior guidelines (during daylight hours) for non-Muslims during the month of Ramadan:

- Do not eat any food items.
- Do not chew gum.
- Do not chew tobacco.
- Do not smoke.
- Do not drink any liquid.

Saying Goodbye



Midway through 2003 the responsibility of writing and publishing the *Desert Mesh* was handed over to

the ARCENT-Qatar Public Affairs Office. Since the inaugural issue of July 2, we have striven to provide two things for our readership: relevant news pertaining to life at Camp As Sayliyah and Army Capt. Dan Elliott.

Elliott has been a mainstay of the *Desert Mesh*, and with his impending departure from Camp As Sayliyah there will be an incredible hole left to fill in the pages of this publication.

From his role in the historic port mission (Issue 1) to his tireless efforts on the R&R Clothing Drive (Issue 4) to his helpful tips on customer service (Issue 9) Elliott has always given us something to write about.

We laughed with him; we cried with him; we grew with him.

Perhaps nothing better showed his sensitivity, compassion and humility than his work on the R&R Clothing Drive. Donations poured in from all corners of the globe, but Elliott was, as always, the reluctant hero.

"It makes me smile on the outside but cry on the inside [to take the credit]. Let me know if you need a quote or two from me," said Elliott when speaking of his pet project.

Elliott's generosity wasn't limited to touching the lives of R&R soldiers, though. His hands touched too many to recount, and his olive branch was extended to all. Army, Embassy, and contractors—all were equal in the eyes of Elliott.

God speed Capt. Daniel L. Elliott.